

Kansas State Fire Marshal – Fire Prevention Division

References (s): 06-IFC/1017.1, 703.1; 00-101/18.3.6.3.3, 19.3.6.3.3

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FIRE FACT 043 – DOOR WEDGES

One of the most frequently asked questions during the inspection process is “Why cant we prop open the corridor doors?”

The simple answer is that the corridor is typically designed to have a fire-rated separation. The intent of the fire-rated separation is to limit or control the spread of fire thus aiding in evacuation or allowing for limited sheltering while waiting for rescue. The fire-rating is compromised by any kind of opening, such as propping a door open.

However, the answer is not always so simple. We cannot stress enough that facilities review and be familiar with the design and construction of the bulding. Just because a code has allowances for non-rated corridors, does not mean that the building was built and designed to have non-rated corridors.

For example: Schools = Group E Occupanies

The 2000 and 2006 International Building Code Requirements:

Corridor Rating = 1hr (Non-sprinklered building)

Corridor Rating = 0 (With sprinkler system)

Meaning: If the building has a full sprinkler system throughout, then the corridor is not required to have a rating, therefore the classrooms are not technically required to even have a door. So if the door is not required, then there is no requirement to close the door.

The above is an example of the requirements for an educational occupancy built according to the 2000/2006 International Building Code, to view more detailed information or information regarding the other occupancy types you will need to view the appropriate building code that was adopted during it's construction.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Rated Corridor = No Wedges or kickdowns

If the corridor is required by code or code footprint to have a fire-rated separation, then the corridor doors cannot be held-open by a wedge, kick down, trash can, or other similar object. Only approved magnetic hold-open devices, tied into the facility fire alarm would be acceptable. This is applicable regardless of the fire-rating of the corridor (i.e 2-hr, 1-hr, or ½-hr)

Non-rated Corridor = Facility discretion

If the corridor is not required by code or code footprint to have a fire-rated separation, then the corridor doors are permissible to be held-open utilizing anything other than combustible materials or objects that would obstruct exiting from the space.

Hazardous Rooms = Fire-rated separation.

The doors must be protected the same as a rated corridor.

Federal Healthcare = No Wedges or kickdowns

All corridor doors, regardless of the corridor rating, must only require 1-motion to close. The use of a wedge, kick-down, trash can, or other similar object would require more than 1-motion to close. It is permissible to utilize a magnetic hold-open device on rated corrdiors if the device is tied into the fire alarm system. It is permissible to utilize a manetic hold-open device or an approved friction device on non-rated corridors, provided that it still only requires 1-motion to close the door.